

Format for Recording Conference Sessions

(Use the categories that apply to your session)

Session Name and Time: Responding to Public Pressure (AM)

Featured Speakers: **Gary Doniger, Director, Taxpayer Service in IRS Taxpayer Treatment and Service Improvement Office**

Jim Jones, Deputy Director, US ACE Baltimore District

Presentation Summary: Mr. Doniger, filling in for Judy Tomaso [Program Executive for the Taxpayer Treatment and Service Improvement Program in the Internal Revenue Service (IRS)], discussed how the IRS responded to intense scrutiny by evaluating feedback from many different customers and sources to develop a realistic plan of action. He also discussed IRS accomplishments in implementing that plan which refocused the agency on its customers. Prioritizing rather than knee-jerk reacting is essential as is listening to ALL customers (not just most vocal) and refocusing the agency from numbers to service was key. Balanced performance measures are essential and all 3 areas must be equally important. Measures cannot be “beans” only! Top management must “walk the talk” too. IRS Commissioner sits on taxpayer treatment decision making group and group reports directly to Commissioner. Involving front-line employees (both getting feedback and in understanding and using customer feedback) is important along with improving internal service and the work environment.

Mr. Jones presented a case study in responding to significant public pressure at a highly visible former waste disposal site in the middle of a neighborhood in Washington, DC which encompassed embassies and expensive homes. This case study shows the different degrees of public pressure and the importance of listening to partners and customers (local health department found new areas of concern). The immediacy of impact on customers intensifies the public pressure often. This also is an example of listening to customers even when we are “the experts”.

Both speakers addressed several similar issues: importance of top involvement, need to go beyond normal work hours to meet customer needs, need to prioritize feedback and act

1. Agency identified and **listened** to customers: Individual taxpayers, self-employed, small businesses, large corporations, practitioners, Congress, employees.

2. Create organization and plan for deal with competing priorities and different needs.

3. IRS began with a change in its mission statement: took out “collecting taxes” entirely and focused on SERVICE. Then the agency integrated service into its goals and objectives:

1. Service to each taxpayer (filing, first quality service pre- and post-filing)
2. Service to all taxpayers (equity, overall voluntary compliance).

4. IRS improved productivity by creating a quality work environment/

1. Create executive level program (Taxpayer Treatment and Service Improvement) reporting directly to agency head – this is the Key Change Program and is the focal point for near-term (18 month) change.
2. Set up an executive forum for making choices and prioritizing efforts with the agency head serving on this.

5. Prioritize – can’t accomplish everything [IRS Commissioner says “Best is the enemy of good.” The agency had to set realistic goals from a list of 5300 separate initiatives gathered from customer and employee feedback. Linked these together to get a more manageable number and then used a cost-benefit (risk analysis) approach to set priorities. The criteria for this analysis was: results and benefits, impact on customers and employees, organizational capacity to accomplish, and how long to accomplish.

6. Implementation

1. Employees must see the connection of each initiative to the goals, mission, and vision of the organization
2. Integrate key organizational processes – budget, strategic plan, and measures (one drives the other) and employees must see these are directed toward goals and mission.

Improved Work Environment

- Elevated grade levels
- Provided electronic research (for laws, regs, and guidance)
- Required customer satisfaction training
- Balance measures – customer, employee, and business practices all equally important
- 3-day training on this for managers and 1 ½ for employees

Jim Jones, Deputy Engineer for the largest District, is now responsible for cleaning up chemical warfare material disposed/stored from the early 1900's in an area in the middle of the nation's capital. This neighborhood now has embassies and expensive residences (1200 private homes at an average cost of \$3,000,000. In remediating and restoring the area, the USACE had to deal with foreign soil on the embassies. The customers included the Spring Valley residents, the ambassadors (and their governments), and property owners in the area. Other stakeholders were EPA, state government, the Secret Service, local government, and the media.

The customer concerns were health and safety, noise, direct impact on lives, comprehensive investigation and clean up, property values, emergencies and unexpected events, media coverage, evacuations/relocation, property restoration (at embassies required working with foreign governments for approval), terrorism, work schedules.

The USACE met weekly with all property owners at meetings, one-on-one, and used newsletters and a web site and 800 number updated daily. The agency also held weekly media days and delivered by hand letters to residents before any major event. The deputy himself met with the families.

When one family wanted relocating (right next to site with small children and a nanny in the house alone all day), the Corps tested thoroughly and found excess exposure to justify relocation although contamination did not warrant a buyout as residents would have preferred.

Key Questions of the Speaker:

1. How are restoration sites prioritized? Did affluent neighborhood make a difference?

No, but the fact that this is one of only 2 residential contaminated sites for which the

4. Why wasn't this site publicized more?

Initially, much more coverage was given and there was more local interest. However, as Corps provided all the information they had and worked closely with impacted customers and set up the 800 number and web site, the neighborhood became comfortable and trust was established. The issues were no longer sensational.

5. Did USACE consider an on-site information office?

The Corps did use a full-time on-site office initially until the neighborhood and media were satisfied and the interest died down. Then coverage was reduced and replaced by 800 number, the web site, and door-to-door letters (when needed).

6. How does government make something right when there is not authority or funding to do so?

By doing all that an agency can and by sharing information with customers and providing all the assistance possible.

How can EPA use this information?

EPA can use IRS example in balancing our performance measures, prioritizing customer feedback, in strategic planning, in focusing vision and mission on service to customers and in establishing customer service standards and plans.

USACE lessons learned can be applied in working with customers who are directly impacted by agency actions.

Where in EPA can this information be used?

These practices and lessons learned can be used at the Agency level and by most organizations within the agency that are interested in refocusing programs on customers and agency impact on customers.

Both speakers provided information on how to listen and respond to customer needs and how to satisfy customers. The IRS provides an example of how to refocus an organization